

Remarks

Applicants thank the Examiner for his work in connection with this patent application. Applicants will first address the amendments and then respond to the issues raised in the Office Action.

Amendments

The claims are amended as noted. Text additions are underlined and text deletions are stricken or in brackets (for deletions involving fewer than 5 characters). As is apparent, all of the claim amendments are non-substantive and are made for grammatical clarity or for purposes of agreement between terms. Claims 8 and 19 are clarified regarding movement of the first and second alignment elements.

New claims 37-51 are fully supported by the specification. Support in the application for claims 37-51 may be found, for example, at page 28, lines 6-21, and page 30, line 17 through page 32, line 18.

Remarks Regarding the Claim Rejections

Claims 1-7, 10, 12-17, 21-23, 25, 26, 28 and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) under U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0117030 A1 (Gambaro et al.) Reconsideration is requested in view of the following remarks.

Gambaro describes a log saw used in the paper products manufacturing industry. In such industry, web material is manufactured in long cylindrical rolls, referred to as "logs." The long logs must then be separated, or converted, into smaller segments or rolls which can be packaged or processed into a consumer-usable product. For example, separate rolls of "wet wipe" web

material are said to be separated from these long rolls. Please see Gambaro paragraphs 0002 and 0050.

Gambaro discloses a multi-blade saw designed to cut these long logs into smaller segments. The process is initiated by placing a log (20) in a concave holder (18) on an infeed conveyor (12). Id. at paragraph 0049. The logs (20) are delivered to the infeed conveyor (12) in a consistent manner, such that the logs are in alignment with each other. Id. at paragraph 0054. The logs may be aligned manually or in an automated manner -- importantly, no alignment structure is disclosed. Alignment does not appear to be critical as any portions of the log beyond the outermost blade are simply cut off as waste or recycled. Id.

The log (20) is next dropped onto a guide plate (28). The log (20) then rolls into one pocket (14) of a wheel-like distribution sprocket (10). Id. at paragraph 0055. The distribution sprocket (10) rotates in the direction of arrow (64) causing the log (20) to be moved into the cutting area. Id. at paragraph 0056. Again, no log alignment procedure or structure is disclosed.

The log (20) is then cut into smaller segments by saw (8) which includes a plurality of circular blades (16) which may be mounted on a common shaft (42) for co-rotation. Id. at paragraphs 0062 and 0063. The number of blades (16) determines the number of individual rolls (22) into which the log (20) will be cut. Twenty six total blades (16) are shown in connection with Figs. 15-25. Id. at paragraph 0063. Each blade (16) is in alignment with a channel (32) in each pocket (14) so that the blade (16) can cut completely through the log (20). Id. at paragraph 0059.

No alignment procedure or structure is described. Indeed, alignment of the log (20)

seems almost irrelevant as Gambaro again states that the cut-off ends of the log (20) or "cookies" are simply discarded. Id. at paragraph 0065.

Independent claims 1, 12 and 25 claim an invention which is materially different from Gambaro. Independent claims 1 and 12 require:

- An alignment member having a tablet-contact surface spaced apart from the tablet-guide to form a cavity with a decreasing cross-section therebetween, the tablet-contact surface and tablet guide coacting to orient the tablet with a primary axis substantially parallel to a first direction.
- At least one alignment element movably mounted to contact the oriented tablet and move the tablet into alignment for cutting at a cutting position.

Gambaro does not include any alignment member as claimed. Gambaro also lacks any alignment element as claimed.

Independent method claim 25 is directed to a method of automatically cutting a tablet into tablet portions having substantially equal volume and does not involve cutting rolled logs of web material. Claim 25 requires steps of automatic orienting of the tablet and automatic moving of the oriented tablet. Again, Gambaro includes no such steps or structure enabling any such steps.

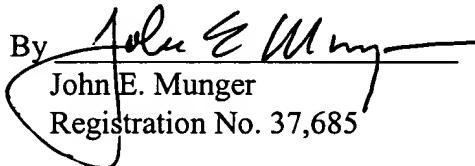
New independent claims 37 and 44 require alignment steps or structure not found in Gambaro.

As Gambaro does not render independent claims 1, 12, 25, 37 or 44 obvious, it is respectfully submitted that their dependent claims should also be determined to be not obvious. In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-7, 10, 12-17, 21-23, 25, 26, 28 and 30 is requested.

Conclusion

Allowance of the claims is requested in view of the foregoing remarks. The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned if that would be of assistance in resolving any outstanding issue regarding this application. The Commissioner is authorized to debit deposit account 10-0270 for the full amount of any other fee due (at the large entity rate) in connection with this paper. Kindly notify the undersigned in the event that the deposit account is debited.

Respectfully submitted,

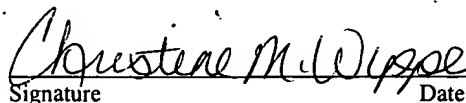
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 9/25/03
Signature Date